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EIGHT QUESTIONS FOR COL. TOM MULLIKIN, ENVIRONMENTAL ATTORNEY AND GLOBAL EXPEDITION LEADER

Guns and Gear | 2:22 PM 03/27/2013 | MILITARY
Contributor



By W. Thomas Smith Jr.

Colonel Thomas Stowe Mullikin – pres. of the Camden-based Mullikin Law firm, deputy commander of the S.C. State Guard, a professional adventurer (expedition leader), university professor,



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SEND A TIP **moment in time.**

This month – just days before presenting a S.C. flag (he took with him on an expedition to the South Pole in 2010) to Maj. Gen. Robert Livingston, the adjutant general of S.C. – Mullikin was meeting in Seattle. He hurried back to S.C. to present the flag, but not before stopping by the Richland County Sheriff's Dept. (RCSD) where he was sworn-in by Sheriff Leon Lott as a "special deputy" and member of the RCSD Dive Recovery Team. Then it was off to Boston, then back to Seattle. This week, Mullikin is in Australia, where among other scheduled business events, he will dive off the Great Barrier Reef (not the first time) and climb Mt. Kosciuszko, the highest mountain in Australia (he's already climbed Elbrus and Kilimanjaro – two of the famous "seven great summits" on the earth's seven continents).

We cornered Mullikin for a quick interview, last week.

W. Thomas Smith Jr.: What is global climate change? Why does it matter? How and why is it being politicized by governments, industry, and the scientific communities? This is heady stuff. What is the truth? How do we effectively – "effectively" being the optimum word



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SEND A TIP and the earth's climate has been changing throughout all of time. Climate is simply weather measured over a longer period of time. Soil-borings, for example, demonstrate that the Antarctic ice-continent at one period of time had a climate similar to a Caribbean nation. A team of international scientists recently discovered an intense warming phase around 52-million-years ago in drill-cores obtained from the seafloor near Antarctica, a region that has been important in climate research. The study was led by scientists determined that the tropical vegetation, including palms and relatives of today's tropical Baobab trees, were growing on the coast of Antarctica 52-million-years ago.

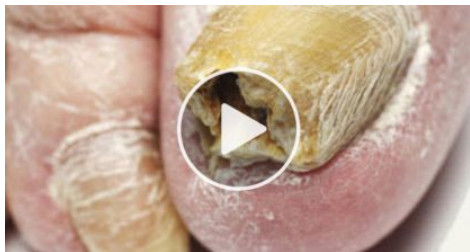
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Climate calculations include factors such as temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind, precipitation, atmospheric particle-count and other meteorological elemental measurements over long periods. Natural climatic vicissitudes create challenges for mankind.

This issue in many ways has been hijacked by activists seeking to create a

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SEND A TIP **ed with a changing climate and**
iotic arguments about the degree
of anthropogenic interference.

The truth can be better disseminated when the conversation centers on the underlying facts of the issue. What are the greenhouse gases and where do they come from? What are the natural oscillations of the earth's climate and what can we predict from past ecological behavior? What are the real challenges upon which we can agree (i.e., sea level rise juxtaposed to human populations on seaport cities).

Smith: Talk about humankind's impact on the environment. Is global climate change being caused by industrialized man?

MULLIKIN: The preponderance of scientific evidence is that man contributes (anthropogenic interference) less than six percent of the total greenhouse gases that are emitted each year. That said, the better question is whether man's actions amplify global climatic change. The complexity of this issue is compounded when you understand that we have only one atmosphere, so that if the United States has a reduction but China's emissions continue to explode, the earth's atmospheric total is increased. So to the extent that man can make a positive difference, the solution must be a global solution.

Smith: What about existing (and rapidly growing) and emerging industrial powers

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SEND A TIP **IN:** The single biggest challenge discussing reduction of global greenhouse gases is the burgeoning growth and expansive increase of greenhouse gas emissions from China. The nation is now the single largest country source of greenhouse gas emissions. An equally great environmental challenge is the associated pollution that accompanies the technology from which the greenhouse gases are emitted such as mercury. These listed toxic air pollutants are rarely discussed in the same debate but the United States is choking on these dangerous gases which cross the Pacific Ocean from China to our west coast shores.

Smith: Talk about some of the existing and new technologies like solar, wind, hydro-electric, nuclear, and even methane collection from solid-waste landfills and recycling.

MULLIKIN: There are existing and developing technologies that can reduce greenhouse gases that should be explored. When representing our clients we search for cost effective sources to reduce or sink greenhouse-gas emissions.

Environmental sustainability and economic sustainability are not mutually exclusive. More large sources should consider a thorough sustainability study to identify efficient and cost effective



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SEND A TIP ^g potential of 23-times that of dioxide. One of the single largest sources of human-induced emissions of methane is from solid waste landfills. The technology to cap and extract these gases for use to offset other traditional power sources has existed for years. We need to explore much wider use of this technology.

Where economically feasible, we should explore greater use of solar and wind to displace more traditional sources of power. As these technologies come to market and become more competitively priced, we will see wider use. South Carolina has a wonderful opportunity to be a world leader through broader application of power derived from hydrogen.

Smith: In the award-winning film, *The Whole Truth*, you talk about “the broader confluence of three large issues – economic security through trade, energy security, and environmental protection.” Are we in 2013, moving in a globally sustainable, earth-friendly direction on each of these issues?

MULLIKIN: We are beginning to crawl out of a global recession where the growth of global greenhouse emissions and other air pollutants slowed due to the reduction of the economic activity driving the increases in these emissions. We have a wonderful opportunity to establish thoughtful global policies now before the economy returns to a robust state.



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SEND A TIP ¹tal drilling technologies. The
ive use of these technologies to
access our natural resources has driven
economic productivity across the country
while providing an energy source that has
considerable economic and
environmental benefits.

Shale gas innovation has led to situation
where the U.S. is on the cusp of being a
net energy exporter.

This obviously makes our nation less
reliant on energy imported from
unfriendly regions of the world, and it
allows our collective wealth to be put to
work here in our country.

Also, natural gas is a clean burning fuel
that releases half of the carbon dioxide of
coal and no mercury. Shale gas is the
leading example of how the application of
emerging technologies (and the absence
of government obstruction) will see a
more globally sustainable environment
and economy.

From a policy perspective, the shale gas
revolution is interesting because it is
perhaps the single largest energy
development in more than a century but
was not anticipated by policymakers at
the time that previous international
environmental accords were being
formulated less than a decade ago.

I think the lesson for all of us moving
forward is that we should demand that
our leaders are not limited by a lack of



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Smith: The Great Barrier Reef is the largest living organism in the world. It and so many other vitally important geographic points of focus (like the polar ice shelves, the Namib Desert, and the Amazon rain forests), have been greatly affected by the variables associated with global climate change. What – if any – are the key geographic points of focus that we must address now?

MULLIKIN: First, we need to continue to educate globally. Developing nations are likely the greatest threats, and they also serve as the areas of greatest opportunities.

Through developments over the last several years, these developing nations have an opportunity to avoid some of the environmental challenges that most developed nations faced over the last 50 years. If we could help these nations reduce their carbon concentration, waste-handling, and then increase their overall environmental protections through applications of environmental and energy efficiencies that developed nations have employed, we could avoid tremendous degradation of the global atmosphere and waterways. We could also allow them to improve the lives of their families while reducing their stress on the environment.

Smith: What are the strategic military implications of global climate change?



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the great Egyptian empire might
actually have been brought down not by
human enemies, but rather by climate
change in the Nile Valley.

It is believed that this change turned lush
fields and homelands into the deserts
that exist today. Global climate change
will undoubtedly alter the strategic
landscape that guides our military
planners.

I recently attended a military planning
meeting and was delighted to see that the
Defense Dept. is moving beyond viewing
sustainability as “bugs and bunnies.”
Rather DoD is now viewing developing
technologies as an opportunity to save
lives.

As an example, in the wars in Iraq and
Afghanistan, we’ve seen that – as a
primary tactic of insurgents – convoys
have been targeted on isolated stretches
of highway. These convoys are – and have
been – often tasked with transporting fuel
to forward operating bases (FOBs) in
areas of conflict. Through application of
alternative energy sources – for example,
solar power – these FOBs could avoid the
necessity of employing these transported
fuels. This is just one, though very
important, use of alternative energy that
demonstrates clear strategic military
implication.

**Smith: You’re an attorney by trade, widely
held to be an expert on global**



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and climbed some of the world's
highest mountains. How have these
expeditions challenged your thinking
about the environment?**

MULLIKIN: By traveling to many of the most fragile eco-systems in the world, I have had the opportunity to study first-hand the impacts of a changing climate on the local landscape and its indigenous people. Many of these sites have left an indelible impression on my thinking and have created passion and awareness that is hard to describe. From the people in the Namib Desert region to the wonderful tribes along the Amazon; from the native people inhabiting the Arctic to the Aussies who protect the Great Barrier Reef; all of these people, the flora and fauna are the reason for my passion and interest. It frustrates me how the environment and its protection have been manipulated by some who seek only pecuniary gain. One of the greatest pleasures of my life has been taking people from all walks of life and all political persuasions into these eco-systems and seeing their interests and passions blossom as they seek new knowledge.



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